

VF - Poland

INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION OF THE VISUALLY
HANDICAPPED IN POLAND.

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Information

on the Situation of the Visually Handicapped in Poland

After the World War II the blind in the Polish Peoples Republic resumed their activity aiming at establishing their own, uniform, autonomous organization by turning the then existing numerous charitable institutions and regional organizations of disabled persons.

Thanks to the favourable conditions which had been offered by the new social structure, in 1951 their endeavours were crowned with success and the Polish Union of the Blind was organized. A few years later, the economic activity of the Union was turned over to the specially organized for this purpose Union of Cooperatives of the Blind. At present, the whole activity of the blind is concentrated in these two Unions.

The Polish Union of the Blind is the sole organisation which represents the interests of all the visually handicapped in Poland. According to the record on 31st December, 1963 there were in Poland 12,300 blind persons, of which 12,435 were the members of the Union. The Union carries neither charitable nor economic activity, and nearly all its funds come from the appropriations made by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs which performs authority supervision over the activity of the Union.

The prime task of the Union is to associate all visually handicapped and to represent their interests, and in particular to secure for them adequate living conditions, to improve their general and vocational education, to organize social and vocational rehabilitation, to perform cultural, educational and recreational activity, to provide conditions for adequate rest, etc. In this activity the Union closely co-operates with the central and local state authorities and with a number of

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According to the records of the Department of Statistics in Poland

in 1950 blind persons, of which 13,140 were women and 1,860 men

The Union carries out its activity in various fields, such as

and its funds come from the government, private and public

and social activities which contribute to the economic and

the activity of the Union.

The main task of the Union is to organize all visually handicapped

and to represent their interests, and to provide for their

to provide living conditions for them, their families and social

education, to organize cultural and recreational activities, to

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social establishments and organisations, among others with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education /within the scope of teaching blind children/, Union of Cooperatives of the Blind, local government authorities, etc.

The superior authority of the Union is its Central Board domiciled in Warsaw. It heads 17 District Boards in all the provinces, and these, in turn, head about 200 local units /circles and groups/. In this way the whole country is covered by the activity of the Union. The officers of the Union consist of blind persons who are elected at all levels. Directly subordinated to the Central Board in Warsaw are the Braille Printing House, Central Braille Library, Talking Book Studio, Recreation Home for the Blind at Muszyna, Rehabilitation Centre for Newly Blind Persons, and Typhological Centre /with breeding, education, vocational training, and welfare divisions/.

The blind in Poland enjoy a number of privileges among which it is well worth to mention the following:

- employed blind persons and cooperatives of the blind are completely exempt from the fiscal tax;
- tax reductions for blind farmers;
- all the members of the Union and the family on their upkeep are entitled to avail themselves of the public health service free of charge;
- immunity from telephone and radio subscription charges;
- free travel by railway and bus on the territory of the whole country for guides and persons accompanying the members of the Union, as well as free of charge travel by public city communication facilities for the blind and their guides;
- unrepayable doles given by the Union and local authorities to blind

social establishments and organizations, among others with the

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the scope of teaching blind children, Union of Cooperatives of the

Blind, local government authorities, etc.

The superior authority of the Union is the Central Board established

in Warsaw. It heads 17 District Boards in all the provinces, and these

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the whole country is covered by the activity of the Union. The objects

of the Union consist of blind persons who are placed at all levels

directly subordinated to the Central Board in Warsaw are the District

Printing Houses, Central Braille Library, Talking Book Studio,

Recreation Home for the Blind at Masaryk, Rehabilitation Center for

Blind Typists, and Typographical Center (with Exchange, a printing

workshop, etc.), and various districts.

The blind in Poland enjoy a number of privileges among which is the

right to receive the following:

- exempted blind persons and cooperatives of the blind are exempted

from the tax on the use of land;

- tax reductions for blind farmers;

- all the members of the Union and the family of their wives are

admitted to public health centers free of charge.

Moreover:

- transport from railway and road stations is free of charge;

- free travel by railway and bus on the territory of the whole country

for blind and persons accompanying the members of the Union;

- as well as free of charge travel by public and communication facilities

for the blind and their guides;

- therapeutic relief given by the Union and local authorities to blind

- persons who are not employed and require financial assistance;
- free of charge general and vocational training;
- partly repayable allowance in the form of tape recorders, watches, white canes, guide dogs, etc.

The services rendered by the Union in 1963 are illustrated by the following figures:

1. Breeding and education

- There were organized 35 Braille writing courses completed by 320 blind persons; further 50 blind persons being taught individually.
- Primary school teaching included 60 grown up blind persons.
- Secondary schools of different types were attended by 130 blind persons, and 40 blind persons studied at the universities. Apart of the assistance afforded by the State, all the studying blind persons obtained reader scholarships and material assistance from the Union.
- The teaching of blind children was performed in 7 special schools subordinated to the Ministry of Education. The assistance of the Union consisted in giving the pupils indispensable educational equipment.
- As every year there were organized summer camps for blind children and rest camps for the students of secondary schools and universities.
- The local units performed their activities in:
 - 70 reading rooms /amusements, lectures, chats, etc./;
 - 40 music teams;
 - 15 chorus groups;
 - 16 recitation groups;

- 45 sport groups /swimming, gymnastics, canoeing, tourism, chess/

In the activity of the above mentioned groups and teams participated about 1300 blind persons.

2. Publishing activity

The Central Board publishes 8 different types of periodicals for the youth and grown up, both popular and expert /among others for cooperators, musicians and esperantists/. Moreover, it publishes schoolbooks. In 1963 there were printed in total 24,000 of metal plates which served to make over 1,000,000 of copies.

3. Activity of the Central Braille Library

The Central Braille Library has 35 regional centres.

The collection of the Library consists of:

7,500 titles of Braille books in 27,000 volumes.

1,000 titles of Braille music books in 1,600 volumes.

250 talking books on tapes.

980 black print vocational books.

In 1963 about 2,500 permanent readers availed themselves of the services of the Library.

4. Rehabilitation of newly blind persons and those losing their sight

Sixty persons availed themselves of the services of the Rehabilitation Centre in Warsaw. There were organised three-month courses for men and women. The programme comprised psychological testing, medical examinations, teaching of Braille writing and to write on black print machine, spacial orientation and cane travel, performance of everyday activities /cooking, tidying up, sewing, baby nursing, etc/, use of rehabilitation equipment, improvement of general knowledge, practice in workshops, etc.

as sport groups (voluntary, gymnastics, dancing, football, chess, etc.) In the activity of the above mentioned groups and teams persons

total about 1700 persons.

2. Publishing activity

The Central Bank publishes 8 different types of periodicals for the youth and grown up, both popular and expert (among others for cooperatives, students and specialists). Moreover, it publishes schoolbooks. In 1953 there were printed in total 24,000 of school books which served for more than 1,000,000 of pupils.

3. Activity of the Central Bank's Library

The Central Bank's Library has 25 regional centres.

The collection of the Library consists of:

1. 2,000 titles of Bank's books in 27,000 volumes;

2. 1,000 titles of Bank's books in 1,500 volumes;

3. 100 titles of Bank's books in 1,000 volumes;

4. 100 titles of Bank's books in 1,000 volumes;

5. 100 titles of Bank's books in 1,000 volumes;

6. 100 titles of Bank's books in 1,000 volumes.

4. Specialization of staff, persons and their location

Staff persons are divided themselves in the activity of the Bank's

Central Bank in Warsaw. There are organized three main branches for

the work and research. The program includes psychological, technical,

medical examinations, research of Bank's working and to write on

Bank's work, special organization and other things.

Examinations of working conditions, working, living up, working

conditions, etc. are the specialization of the Bank's

Central Bank's research in various fields, etc.

Examinations of working conditions, working, living up, working

The graduates were directed for further vocational training in compliance with their liking and capabilities.

Furthermore, there was opened in Warsaw the first district consulting centre performing rehabilitation work among the blind persons who are beyond the Centre.

There is planned a similar rehabilitation centre for the blind persons living in the country.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Before the World War II there was only about 150 blind persons who earned their keep, the rest went begging or lived at the expense of their families or charitable organizations.

After the World War II the number of employed blind persons was constantly increasing and in 1963 reached an impressive figure of 6,000.

The majority of the visually handicapped are employed in the Cooperatives of the Blind. In 1963 the Union of Cooperatives of the Blind, founded in Warsaw, associated 23 cooperatives situated all over the country.

The said cooperatives employed in 1963 over 4,000 visually handicapped persons, of which about 1,800 persons by domestic system. Both the cooperatives and the State are engaged in the rehabilitation work of the visually handicapped. The State is engaged in the rehabilitation work of the visually handicapped by creating and equipping special buildings erected from their own funds and providing them with special material and social equipment. The cooperatives perform among their members an extensive welfare, on the whole, additional and recreational activity. The cooperatives have also special boarding houses for single blind persons and houses for families.



Education will give the blind of the country a new horizon. The visually handicapped are trained for their future employment by the Vocational Training Centre, which is situated in the district of the Ministry of War, as at the workshops of the handicapped cooperatives.

Moreover, the cooperatives carry on different types of work and have a history of their own. During the last years of the war, the Vocational Training Centre has trained blind workers for the Polish Union of Handicapped of the Blind, belonging to the Ministry of War. The handicapped cooperatives already co-operate with the Polish Union of the Blind. The members of the cooperatives are at the same time the members of the Polish Union of the Blind.

The cooperatives of the blind are busy in many ways: knitting, making, electrotechnical assembly /concrete, etc./, electrical work, etc., metal work, etc. /metal work, etc./, plastic and plywood products, etc. In many of these cooperatives collaborate with the local industry, in particular in the field of assembly and electrotechnical work.

In 1963 the number of blind workers in the country was 1,100.

Summary:

Number of blind workers	1,100
Number of blind workers in the country	1,100
Number of blind workers in the economy and commerce	1,100
Number of blind workers in the agriculture	1,100
Number of blind workers in the industry	1,100

Number of blind workers in the country: 1,100.

The handicapped are trained in various ways: in the Vocational Training Centre, in the workshops of the handicapped cooperatives, in the Ministry of War, etc.

The number of blind workers in the country is 1,100.



6. Welfare activity

In 1963 the Polish Union of the Blind distributed among visually handicapped:

- 400 orders to sanatoriums;
- 1,260 orders to an own recreation centre;
- 30 orders to recreation homes abroad;
- 20 guide dogs;
- 850 Braille wrist watches;
- 1,500 white canes;
- 30 tape recorders;
- 140 Braille thermometers;

and a number of other assistance equipment, e.g. needles, tailor's and joiner's rules, etc.

Moreover, thanks to the endeavours of the Union, 120 blind persons obtained new flats.

At the end of 1963 the National Congress of the Delegates of the Polish Union of the Blind took place and new officers were elected, as well as the guide lines were worked out for the next five years of the activity of the Union. During the present term the attention of the Union authorities will be concentrated, first of all, on the complex rehabilitation of the blind living in the country and in small towns, with simultaneous further extension of the services within the scope of breeding, education, rehabilitation, and vocational training of the visually handicapped, as well as protection against blindness and extensive propaganda among people who have no eye troubles.

Warsaw, March, 1964.

Welfare activities

In 1953 the Polish Union of the Blind distributed money worth 12

hundred thousand:

- 400 orders to assistants;
- 1,000 orders to an own recreation center;
- 30 orders to recreation homes abroad;
- 20 guide dogs;
- 870 Braille wrist watches;
- 1,500 white canes;
- 30 tape recorders;
- 140 Braille thermometers;

and a number of other assistance equipment, e.g. needles, fabric and paper, etc.

Moreover, thanks to the endeavours of the Union, 120 blind

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Warsaw, March 1954.

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